

Keep Members Interested

It is easy to attract new members in times of crisis. Hot button issues energize the neighborhood, particularly if residents feel their property values or quality of life is threatened. However, after the publicity dies away and the problem is resolved, active members may disappear. It is considerably more difficult to sustain interest during mundane times.

Keeping the interest and involvement of association members is an ongoing challenge in every neighborhood. Here are some pointers and ideas that hopefully will stimulate your thinking.

Here are some helpful hints to maintaining interest:

- ***Be realistic in your expectations of the members.*** Many neighbors have other priorities that may limit participation.
- ***Stay focused on a few well-defined goals or projects.***
- ***Regularly check that meeting times, locations and meeting lengths are convenient for members.***
- ***Celebrate each success.***
- ***Ask individual neighbors for help or their involvement.*** Sometimes a personal invitation to help is most effective. A person may be willing if asked, but may not volunteer or speak up in a group setting.
- ***Find out what is important to your members*** and get them involved in committees or projects involving their interest.
- ***Make sure to welcome new neighbors.*** Establish a welcoming committee that visits or calls each new resident. The Mid-County Regional Services Center has welcome packets to help you.
- ***Organize regular social functions*** to encourage a sense of community.
- ***Sponsor clean-up days***, taking one street at a time so that the work seems manageable and can be accomplished in the morning.

Welcome Packets

Welcome packets for new County residents are available at the Mid-County Regional Services Center.

Consider distributing these packets as part of your ongoing new neighbor welcome efforts.

- ***Create a telephone tree, listserv or other communication system.***
- ***Recognize volunteers*** by thanking each individual at a general meeting; acknowledging someone's efforts in your newsletter, or neighbors cooking dinner or cake/cookies for someone.
- ***Follow up*** on issues brought to the association for resolution.

Hold Social Events

One feature of more successful community associations is to offer a range of activities. They do so by staying in touch with neighbors' individual needs.

Not everyone is an activist. Some of your residents may be motivated by an opportunity to socialize, such as an event on a national holiday.

Consider combining social events with social responsibility by including food drives, or raffles that benefit local charities.

Other ideas for building community include organizing:

- ***A community yard sale,***
- ***Used book sale,***
- ***Yard beautification contest,*** or a
- ***Community association logo contest***

Undertake a Membership Drive.

Don't inadvertently restrict your numbers by having membership forms and sign up sheets only at meetings. In order to maximize your membership potential, be everywhere your neighbors are.

- ***Have volunteers go door to door.*** This can be a week-long effort or one-day blitz. Consider having a membership drive and then sponsoring a party that same day for volunteers to have fun and share experiences.
- ***Arm volunteers with printed materials.*** This can be a simple letter from the group's President that explains your neighborhood organization along with details of upcoming activities. Materials may also include information on municipal services and programs available in the area. Also, volunteers should carry membership forms with them and offer both immediate and mail-in membership opportunities.
- ***Develop a block leader network.*** Block leaders can pass out flyers and newsletters, welcome new residents, serve as a conduit for specific problems on the block, and place volunteers in activities. Work with organized Block Watches to promote safety within your community.

Members can also be found at community gatherings. Sponsor a booth at a community festival or event. This is a great opportunity to talk to people in your area. Remember to have information and membership sign-up sheets at your booth.